

1/12 Marines graduate Corporals Course

Corporals complete 10-day training course while deployed to Iraq

1st Lt Tyson J. Scott

Task Force Military Police 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment

AL ASAD, Iraq - January 17 was another banner day for the noncommissioned officer corps of Task Force Military Police 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment. That day marked the graduation of Corporals Course 2-09 for 26 Marine corporals and Navy petty officers third class.

Since arriving in Iraq, the battalion has rotated more than 75 corporals through the 10-day course. Sergeant Maj. Craig J. Cowart, the Task Force sergeant major, native of Valdosta, Ga., and a huge proponent of the courses, was the guest of honor and addressed the graduates.

“Performing well in front of your peers is probably more challenging than anything else,” Cowart said. “I have now, and always will, have a special place in my heart for the corporal of Marines. You are the backbone of our Corps.”

The Corporals Course marks the first level in Marine Corps Professional Military Education, or PME, where peer leadership is a critical factor in an individual’s professional development and serves as an integral part of building the foundation for young leaders to build on.

The Corporals Course, developed and run by TFMP, was a 110-hour program providing classroom instruction and practical application on a variety of subjects, including customs and courtesies, close order drill, war fighting techniques, and combat conditioning, as well as leadership techniques, traits and principles. In addition to the academics which required as much as two hours of study each night, there was an aggressive physical training program.

“The PT regimen was intense, including six mile runs and a variety of circuit courses designed to get [us] accustomed to the new combat physical fitness test.” said Cpl. Matthew D. Boggs, a Helen, Ga. native who was recognized as the Course Honor Graduate for overall excellence in the curriculum.

Staff and senior noncommissioned officers of TFMP provided in-house instruction and leadership as squad advisors and trainers, as well as mentors for the students.

“The mission for us as squad advisors is to push the corporals out of their comfort zone and forge them into young leaders,” said Sgt. Jared Archer, 1st squad advisor from Girard, Ohio. “It’s a good feeling to be able to instruct and guide new corporals in the right direction so the NCOs in the battalion as a whole get stronger, and with this course we are doing that; building good, strong, confident leaders.”

Sergeant Jarvis Dixon, 3rd squad advisor and native of Atlanta, Ga., stated the class improved their Physical Fitness Test score an average of 17 points. This is a direct reflection of the rigorous PT program instilled by the instructors.

“With a little pain, all obstacles are achievable,” Dixon said. “Our intent is for the Marines to maintain the intensity and take it back with them to their shop.”

The curriculum is designed to develop the corporals into stronger leaders of Marines and war fighters capable of independent thought and action.

“The classes expand on the foundations of war fighting, providing the corporals a better, full understanding of the spectrum of conflict,” said Staff Sgt. Jamie Long, Tulsa, Ok., the Military Working Dog operations chief and



Cpl. Kristofer R. Atkinson

Corporals of Task Force Military Police 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, graduate Corporals Course 2-09, Jan. 17, at al Asad, Iraq. The course was conducted by TFMP 1/12 Marines while deployed to the al Anbar Province, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Corporals Course instructor. “The Marines were evaluated on war gaming techniques through a new virtual battlefield on the computer designed to replace sand tables, giving the opportunity to conduct immediate action drills without any coordination of physical assets in a variety of scenarios. This is the future of training.”

Corporal Arturo Flores, native of Los Angeles, Calif., and a member of Headquarters Battery, stated the course was both physically and mentally challenging.

“While I attended Corporals Course not only did I improve myself physically and mentally, I also learned new ways to motivate, lead, and mentor junior Marines,” Flores said.

Corporal Robert P. Fernandez, an Evansville, Ind. native, was the recipient of the Gung Ho Award. The Gung Ho Award recipient if voted

on by all the NCOs in the course and is designed to recognize one of their own for the outstanding effort in teamwork and esprit de corps.

“The true challenge of Corporal’s Course was working as a team and knowing that you couldn’t fail at an event because it would mean failing your fellow Marines, just like life in the Marine Corps every day,” Fernandez said of the award.

Sentiments such as these demonstrate how the completion of this course for the group of corporals not only contributes to the development of the individual Marine, but to the effective functioning and growth of leaders within the Task Force and the Marine Corps.

“Corporals Course is the easy part,” Dixon said. “The real test begins when you go back to your shop and start to lead Marines.”

TRICARE programs save dollars, increase service

Lifelines

Office of the Secretary of the Navy

TRICARE is consolidating, updating and economizing to provide more efficient, cost-effective service to active, reserve and retired service members and their families. In order to support these objectives TRICARE enlisted the support of its users in a program called the Member Choice Center.

According to Austin Camacho a TRICARE spokesman, “One of our first MCC goals was to convert 60,000 retail prescriptions to the convenient mail order option. By reaching out to our customers,” said Mr. Camacho, “TRICARE successfully exceeded that goal, converting over 112,000 retail prescriptions to the mail order option (TMOP). As a result of the growth in mail order

prescriptions beneficiaries saved an estimated \$1.7 million, while the Department of Defense saved approximately \$20.2 million.

“We are excited and proud to see the proven results of TMOP and the MCC,” said Army Maj. General Elder Granger, deputy director, TRICARE Management Activity. “The new Member Choice Center provides excellent customer service, and the overall cost savings are a great benefit for both TRICARE beneficiaries and the DoD. It’s worth the switch.”

Nearly 350,000 beneficiaries enrolled in TMOP receive up to a 90-day supply of most medications for the same amount they would pay for a 30-day supply at a retail pharmacy. Some beneficiaries save as much as 66 percent on medications for conditions such as high blood pressure, asthma or diabetes. Enrollment in the mail order option is

available at TRICARE Online.

“Another program that has been a great benefit to our users is our Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program or CAP,” said Mr. Camacho, “which is a program that provides technical support and equipment to its beneficiaries with disabilities, giving them access to electronic and information technology. It is a centrally funded program that buys and delivers the hardware, software and services that people with disabilities need to function in the workplace.”

The consolidated purchasing saves the government and users thousands of dollars.

“The technology makes the electronic environment accessible to and usable by individuals with hearing, visual, dexterity, cognitive and communications disabilities,” said CAP Director Dinah Cohen. “By using the Web and promoting e-

Government, CAP customers can visit and see the different assistive technologies and request their accommodations – anywhere, anytime.”

TRICARE’s CAP program has won the Presidential Award for Management Excellence – the President’s Quality Award for 2008.

One of the most important announcements by TRICARE is the savings that has been realized and is being passed on to Reservists through the TRICARE Reserve Select program.

“Now that TRS has been in place for several years, we were able to calculate premiums from actual cost data obtained in earlier years,” said Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity. “It is important to provide high quality and affordable healthcare coverage for our National Guard and Reserve families.”